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USER'S GUIDE TO THE RAND INTERVIEWS IN
VIETNAM

W. Phillips Davison

RAND Corporation

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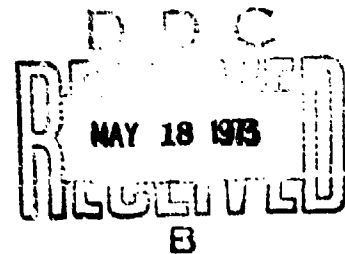
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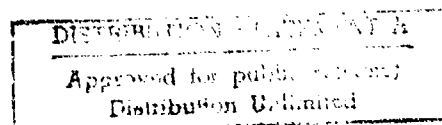
User's Guide to the Rand Interviews in vietnam

W. Phillips Davison



A Report prepared for
ADVANCED RESEARCH PROJECTS AGENCY

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10. ABSTRACT An account of a 4-year Rand project to interview ralliers and prisoners from VC and NVA ranks, and refugees, with an analysis of the scope and limitations of the nearly 2500 interview reports it produced. The reports, approximating 62,000 pages, are a rich source of information about NLF military life and operations, general conditions in NLF-controlled areas, and the ways of thinking of NLF partisans. The interviews are being released to permit wider analysis of their data. They are complete except for the minimal deletion of information that would have jeopardized the anonymity of the respondents, who might later be targets of reprisal. Because the interviews were conducted and reported under wartime conditions, and because the respondents were not randomly selected, the reports are highly susceptible of misinterpretation. This guide is intended to minimize misinterpretation.		11. KEY WORDS NORTH VIETNAM VIET CONG INTERVIEWS	

PREFACE

BETWEEN AUGUST 1964 and December 1968, The Rand Corporation, under contract to the U.S. Department of Defense, conducted approximately 2400 interviews with Vietnamese who were familiar with activities of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army. Reports of those interviews, totaling approximately 62,000 pages, constitute an extraordinarily rich source of information about political and military upheaval in a developing country; about Vietnamese rural life; about the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese armed forces; and about many related subjects. They describe conversations with prisoners captured by South Vietnamese or U.S. forces, defectors who voluntarily left the Viet Cong or the North Vietnamese Army, refugees from battle areas, and a few other kinds of persons. Many of the reports have a poignant, human quality; nearly all are informative about conditions in Vietnam.

In December 1971, action was initiated to make these interview reports available to the public. That has entailed a scrupulous double reading of all the reports and blocking out of information that might enable identification of the respondents. This sanitizing process does not imply a scenario for postwar Vietnam, but reprisals are possible against those who cooperated with the United States and the government of South Vietnam by disclosing certain information. Researchers have an ethical responsibility to ensure that no one suffers from having been a subject of research.

The guiding principle in the excision of information from the reports has been to preserve as much substantive content as possible, blocking out only information that could identify the respondent. At the least this includes the respondent's name, places of residence,

names of relatives and close colleagues, military unit designation, day (not month and year) of rallying or capture and of the interview (interview logs may still be available in Vietnam), and job titles that can be linked to a place or unit. Long reports that give many indirect clues have required more deletions of critical information.

The amount of excision may also vary according to the interview series. For example, in the "DT" series, comprising interviews only in Dinh Tuong Province, it was found that a respondent's battalion could readily be deduced even when blocked out. There were only three Viet Cong battalions in that province, and they could easily be identified by time, district of operation, and date and place of battle. In that case it was necessary to exercise special care in excising all clues to the identity of a member of a given battalion.

The names of the Vietnamese interviewers have also been deleted, both because they too might be subject to reprisal and because they would be potential sources of information about particular interviewees. A code number has been assigned to each interviewer (where named--not every report identified the interviewer) and in some cases is shown on the face sheet of the interview report. Thus, the user may assess whether, for example, particular interviewers are associated with biased interviews or showed such skill that their reports should be flagged for special attention.

In the initial screening of the interviews, the designation "For Official Use Only" at the top and bottom of some pages, and a paragraph on the face sheet stipulating that use of the interview required permission of both Rand and the Department of Defense, Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, were deleted. Subsequently, those restrictions were nullified by a blanket clause, removing all restrictions on distribution, shown on a covering sheet for each interview series. No material, other than the above-described deletions, has been removed from the interview reports being released. Gaps in the numbering of the interviews refer to reports that were not completed, for various reasons explained in the *Guide*; all *available* reports are included.

This *Guide*, which should accompany all interview series issued to the public,^{*} has been prepared to help the user of the interviews understand the purposes and limitations of the interview reports. The *Guide* recounts the history of the interview project and explains how the questionnaires were prepared and administered and how the resulting interviews were written up. Information in it was obtained from conversations or written communication with many of the participants in the project, including field directors, team leaders, and interviewers working in Vietnam, and Rand staff members working on the project in the United States. Other sources are internal Rand memoranda and analyses of the project, and of course the interview reports themselves. It is important for every user to read the *Guide* because it explains the wartime conditions under which the work was conducted and will enable the reader to understand some of the limitations of the material that might otherwise elude or puzzle him.

The text of this *Guide* was drafted in the summer of 1969 by W. Phillips Davison. Dr. Davison was temporary field director of the Rand interview project in Saigon during the summer of 1965, while on leave from the Council on Foreign Relations. He is currently Professor of Journalism and Sociology at Columbia University. Neither he nor any other individual is known to have read all the interview reports.

--March 1972

* See Appendix A for a listing and description of the several interview series. They are available from the National Technical Information Service, Department of Commerce, Springfield, Virginia 22151.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A Brief History of the Interview Project

EARLY IN 1964, in response to expressions of interest from officials of the Defense and State Departments, Rand proposed that a study be made of the structure of the Viet Cong organization and the motivations of those who supported it. Prior to 1964 such a study was not possible, since South Vietnamese President Diem had not allowed American researchers access to Vietnamese prisoners and defectors. But leading members of the U.S. Executive Branch had been heard to make such remarks as. "Who are these Viet Cong? What makes them tick?" Diem's overthrow in 1963 appeared to open the way for such questions to be explored.

Rand's research proposal was approved by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, which agreed to fund it. (Later, the principal funding was provided by the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Defense Department.) In the spring of 1964, two Rand researchers visited Saigon to make preliminary arrangements for the study. They assured themselves that the Vietnamese and U.S. authorities would cooperate and that defectors and prisoners who had been associated with the Viet Cong would be available for interviewing. They also conducted a few exploratory interviews with Viet Cong prisoners being held in Saigon.

The question then became how to staff the project. No members of the regular Rand research staff with previous experience in Southeast Asia were available for assignment to Saigon at that time. Two consultants were then approached. One, a political scientist who had previously

taught at the University of Saigon, went out in the summer of 1964 and started to assemble an interviewing staff of Vietnamese. Most of them were faculty members whom he had previously known at the University. The other consultant, also a political scientist, flew to Saigon in September. He had previously served with the U.S. Information Agency in Southeast Asia and was fluent in Vietnamese; he conducted approximately twenty interviews himself and helped supervise interviews conducted by the Vietnamese staff. They were assisted for a brief period by a mathematician from Rand.

The 137 interviews conducted during this first phase of the project are known as the "Z" series. The questionnaires were constructed in great haste by the consultants, and were frankly experimental. At first they were open-ended and unstructured. Then, an effort was made to structure them more and to obtain a random sample of Viet Cong prisoners to interview. That approach was abandoned when it was found that random selection at some sites turned up respondents who were totally uncooperative or who had spent such a short time with the Viet Cong and in such a lowly position that they could say little about the ideology of the movement. The researchers reverted to the unstructured approach and sought out sources at numerous locations in South Vietnam who were particularly knowledgeable about the Viet Cong, treating them more as an anthropologist treats his informants than as an opinion pollster treats his respondents. With a few exceptions, that approach was continued during the rest of the project.

The "Z" series of interviews aimed at understanding the reasons why some Vietnamese supported the Viet Cong, why they fought against the Government of South Vietnam, and how the movement maintained morale and cohesion. To oversimplify, one might say that the emphasis was on what Vietnamese *liked* about the Viet Cong, or National Liberation Front (NLF).

Shortly before termination of the project's first phase, a group of Rand staff members proceeded to Saigon to replace the two consultants, who had to return to their universities. The newcomers retained some of the Vietnamese interviewers who had been hired in the first phase and also recruited others. (Many of the original Vietnamese interviewers

were able to work only part-time, since they had regular academic jobs in Saigon.) The project was rapidly expanded to make it possible for more interviews to be conducted simultaneously. While two senior Rand staff members took care of central functions in Saigon, three younger staffers served as "team leaders," taking groups of two, three, or four Vietnamese interviewers to various points throughout the country to interview prisoners, defectors, and refugees. In the summer of 1965, one of the team leaders--who was fluent in Vietnamese--set up a semi-permanent office in My Tho, capital of Dinh Tuong Province, and over the next two years obtained interviews with persons who were familiar with Viet Cong activities in that province.

The second phase of the project lasted until the summer of 1967. The series of interview reports produced during this period were labeled "G," "AG," "SF," "DT," and "AGR." The "G" and "AG" series are, to some degree, a continuation of the earlier "Z" series, but they had a different emphasis. While the "Z" interviews focused on why some Vietnamese supported the Viet Cong, and why the Viet Cong organization functioned efficiently, the "G" and "AG" interviews sought broader coverage of the movement and the individual's experience in it. They also inquired into the Viet Cong's military organization and conduct of operations. The "SF" questionnaire was specifically designed to find out what moves people to defect, and was administered only to defectors, or "ralliers" as they are called in Saigon. "DT" interviews were those made in Dinh Tuong Province, with a special questionnaire to elicit information about the Viet Cong organization in that province. The "AGR" questionnaires focused on the experiences of refugees.

All field work in phase two was under the general direction of a single Rand field director, but frequent changes in both the American and Vietnamese staffs occurred during the period. As it was impossible for Americans to bring their families to Saigon, few researchers were willing to stay for long tours. Some Americans, including the field director, interrupted their tours by taking home leave; others stayed with the project a year or less. Several team leaders did, however, stay for over a year, and one stayed for more than two years. Turn-over in the Vietnamese staff occurred because several interviewers and

translators resigned to take other jobs, while a few proved to be unsuited to their jobs and were released. Changes in the Vietnamese and American staffs inevitably led to slight changes in ways of asking questions, in the focus of the interviews, and in report-writing and editing practices.

The third phase of the project, from the summer of 1967 to the end of 1968, was directed by three different Rand staff members and involved a number of new team leaders and interviewers. "AC" reports continued to be produced during this phase, but in addition other questionnaires having more specialized purposes were introduced. The "K" series was concerned with the structure and functioning of North Vietnamese military units, which by then were being employed on a large scale in the South, as well as with the military units of the Viet Cong. A "V" series focused on Viet Cong activities in hamlets and villages. The "FD" series examined the personal characteristics and backgrounds of persons who joined the Viet Cong. Finally, a "Tet" series was introduced after the Communist lunar new year offensive in January-February 1968. One "Tet" questionnaire was designed to gain information on Vietnamese civilian reactions to the offensive, and another was added somewhat later to obtain information from prisoners and defectors about Viet Cong activities during the offensive.

At the end of 1968, Rand and the Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense (which by then was the sole sponsor) concluded that the basic purposes of the study had been fulfilled, and that further interviews would bring only marginal increases in knowledge about the structure and functioning of the Viet Cong. The project was therefore terminated.

Scope and Limitations of the Interview Reports

Although the overall purpose of the interview project was to gain an understanding of the Viet Cong organization, why it attracted some Vietnamese, why its forces fought effectively, and why other Vietnamese were repelled by it, different phases of the project had different

emphases. Many people, with varying interests, were involved. The central questions were explored from several points of view. As noted, one series of interviews deals largely with the ideological commitment of Viet Cong supporters, a second with both that question and the way the Viet Cong responded to South Vietnamese and U.S. efforts to crush them militarily, a third with the Viet Cong political structure in a single province, a fourth with the impact of the war on civilians in the battle zones, and so on.

Those who use these documents for scholarly purposes should be aware of their strengths and their limitations, and of the extremely difficult conditions under which they were produced. One important caution is that the respondents who were interviewed do not represent a random sample; consequently it is risky to use statistical methods in analyzing the interview reports. Several efforts to obtain random samples of defectors or prisoners were made, but they proved unsuccessful. As a Rand analyst observed in October 1966: "It does not appear feasible to draw any useful objective conclusions from the available data through the use of statistical inference. Furthermore, I can see no possible changes in the data collection methods which would make such conclusions possible." That does not mean that other analytic methods are not useful. Another staff member wrote: "We are, of course, conscious that any interview program, especially under the conditions prevailing in Vietnam, is bound to be imperfect and that the results will contain a variety of distortions. We believe, however, that the internal consistency of the answers, and the fact that many of the data tie in with information obtained from other sources, indicate that much of the collected information is, on the whole, credible and usable for purposes of analysis."

A second caution is that the interview reports are not complete transcripts of questions and answers. Although about half of the interviews were recorded on tape, much of the conversation between interviewer and respondent was omitted when the interviews were written up. For instance, if a respondent did not understand a question and it had to be explained to him, the explanation was usually omitted. The reports might therefore be described as modified transcripts. Every

effort was made, however, to preserve the flavor of the interviews, and insofar as possible the language used in the responses is the language of the respondent. But strange things may happen in translation. One respondent, describing his involvement in a sensitive political situation, was reported as saying that he was "skating on thin ice." The Rand researcher who edited this transcript noted: "On thin ice! In Vietnam!" Nevertheless, when one reads a large number of the interview reports, the flavor comes through clearly, and analysts who are familiar with the Vietnamese language and culture believe it to be authentic.

Every interview project must confront the problem of bias, especially a project such as this one, which used mainly open-ended questions. The questionnaires themselves are biased in that each was framed with certain interests and assumptions in mind. Each Vietnamese interviewer also had his own point of view, which presumably influenced to some degree the responses he obtained. The respondents represented an even wider distribution of opinions and personality types. Some apparently told the interviewer what they thought he wanted to hear; others tried to propagandize the interviewer--to convert him to their own point of view; most had real or simulated difficulties in remembering events in the past. Additional kinds of bias were introduced during the writeup, translation, and editing. The user of these reports can alert himself to, and largely control for, the biases in them by making internal checks, by comparing them with data from other sources, and by familiarizing himself with the conditions under which they were produced.

Probably the most serious source of bias is not in the interview reports themselves but in the mind of the user or analyst. The interviews contain statements that will support almost any theory or political view regarding Vietnam. It is possible for "hawks" and "doves" to quote from them with equal facility. To guard against this kind of bias, two rules of thumb are suggested. First, the user should read a large segment of the material before allowing himself to come to any conclusions. Preferably, he should read all or parts of several interview series, not just one series. Second, he should be on the alert for material that tends to contravene his hypotheses, as well as for material that

tends to support them. Additional, and more sophisticated, checks are possible and desirable but will have to be worked out by each user according to his own needs and capabilities.

Rand personnel working on this project were acutely aware of the limitations of their research. As civilians, they were operating in a war zone, where supplies, transportation, and communication could not be taken for granted. Under pressure to justify their work by producing results rapidly, they worked long hours. Many interview reports were edited and typed by candlelight, without relief from the heat by fans or air conditioning, since the Saigon electric power system operated only sporadically. The cooperation of Vietnamese and American authorities, both civilian and military, was necessary, and all interview reports (with identifying cover sheets removed) were distributed to Vietnamese and American offices in Saigon. Thus, certain subjects were avoided or at least not emphasized; for instance, questions could not be asked about South Vietnamese politics. Long-term planning was impossible, since what could or could not be done was determined to a large degree by the fortunes of war. Many of the shortcomings of the interviews are due not to political bias but to haste, difficult field conditions, and the necessity for a great deal of improvisation.

Readers of the Rand interviews should be prepared to encounter a number of problems having to do with the physical state of the interview reports and the conditions under which the information was gathered.

As regards legibility, stencils for most interview reports were cut on ancient Vietnamese or French typewriters--at first the only ones available--and the stencils were then run on a decrepit mimeograph machine, literally held together with baling wire. The paper used was a rough stock that was locally available in Saigon. Consequently, a large proportion of the finished reports are not easy to read on microfilm. They can be deciphered, and with practice reading speed can be increased almost to normal, but the first few frames may go slowly. Some interview reports were retyped in the United States, and a few stencils were cut on new typewriters. They offer no legibility problems, but they are the exception rather than the rule.

To ease the task, it is recommended that the user of the micro-film version make sure that his reader is equipped with a strong lens--at least 18.25 power. It is also advisable to view the films on a reader that is capable of making printouts when necessary. Some pages that are extremely difficult to read on the screen can be deciphered easily in printed form.

Consistency is variable. Different interview series follow very different patterns. Even with a given series there may be wide variations in the way questions were asked and data were recorded. That is especially true of face-sheet data. The cover sheets for some interview reports give relatively full information about the respondent and identify the interviewer. Other reports may give minimal information about the respondent and may not identify the interviewer at all. The user is therefore advised to read--or at least sample--the interview reports he plans to analyze before setting up any classification scheme. The information he requires may not be available in all series, and may be available for only some reports in a given series.

In most cases, the text of the questions is reproduced in the interview report, along with the respondent's reply. The outstanding exception is the "Z" series (including reports marked "ZHD" and "ZDR"), where the questions are simply identified by number, and the user often has to refer to the questionnaire to understand the reply. The "Z" questionnaires are provided along with the reports. Many of the reports in the "Z" series are in French, or a mixture of English and French.

Reports in all series are numbered sequentially, but not all series are complete. Quite a few reports in the "Z" series, in particular, are missing. A serial number was assigned to every interview, but for various reasons some of the reports were not made. First, some interviews were not completed because the interviewee was not cooperative or simply did not give meaningful answers. In addition, some interviews turned out to be second interviews of a previous respondent. Some completed interviews were never written up because the interviewer or the team leader judged that they did not contain meaningful information, and some reports were completed in Vietnamese but never translated for the same reason. All available interview reports are being published.

Standard headings on some reports may be misleading. For instance, early reports in the "DT" series are prefaced by the statement that the interviews were made to investigate the motivation of defectors. Actually, they go far beyond that objective, and a substantial number of prisoners were interviewed in the "DT" series. In all cases, the user should withhold judgment about the actual content of any series until he has examined a substantial number of the interview reports in it.

It is this writer's opinion that essential aspects of recent Vietnamese history have eluded scholars and journalists, who have hitherto relied mainly on urban-oriented, foreign sources. The Rand interview reports, though they do not give a full account of how the Vietnamese past became the present, add new dimensions. They should be treated as historical documents and approached as an historian approaches his sources, subjecting them to contextual and external criticism. The user may find embedded in these personal accounts, some of them recalling events as far back as the 1930s and 1940s, new insights into the origins and progress of an upheaval that devastated much of Vietnam and deeply affected many other parts of the world, especially the United States. They tell the story of the people at the bottom of the pyramid--the people who brought in the harvests and bore the brunt of the fighting, the hard-working, hopeful, discouraged, terrified people--whose voices have all too seldom been heard.

II. THE QUESTIONNAIRES

DURING THE LIFE of the Rand Interview project in Vietnam a great many different questionnaires were used, and frequently a single questionnaire would evolve through several versions as experience was gained in using it. The various questionnaire instruments can, however, be divided into two principal categories: those that were developed mainly in Saigon by field directors, with the assistance of team leaders and Vietnamese interviewers, and those that were written mainly in the United States by Rand staff members. The "Z," "AG," "ACR," "SF," "DT," and "Tet" series fall into the first category; the "K," "V," and "FD" into the latter. Of course, questionnaires written mainly in Saigon did reflect advice and suggestions received from researchers in the United States, and those written in the United States benefited by feedback from the American field personnel and Vietnamese interviewers.

The "G" and "AG" series account for almost half the total bulk of the interview reports. In designing the "AG" questionnaire, personnel in Saigon attempted to include questions on almost any subject that might prove relevant to understanding the Viet Cong--the nature of its civil and military activities, the motivation and morale of its adherents, its impact on the general populace in Vietnam, and so on. The questionnaire thus constituted something of a "fishing expedition." When it was designed, early in 1965, no specific hypotheses had been developed to test, and it was not known what lines of questioning would prove most fruitful. Furthermore, it had to satisfy a varied group of customers: Rand analysts in the United States, Defense Department officials in Washington, and both military and civilian authorities in Saigon. Many interviews in this series thus have a rambling character,

and cover a wide variety of subjects. In some respects this is a weakness, in that many lines of inquiry were not pursued in depth. In other respects it is a strength. Those who designed the questionnaire had few preconceptions as to what subjects would prove important, so they did not overly channel the questioning, and the resulting body of information is extraordinarily rich and diverse.

The "AG" series benefited from the experience gained with the "Z" questionnaires. In turn, "AG" interviews provided a basis for formulating nearly all the other questionnaires used later, since the subsequent questionnaires focused on subjects that had been at least touched upon in the "AG" interviews. The "DT" questionnaire, which was designed to explore the structure and functioning of the Viet Cong organization in a single province, borrowed especially heavily from the "AG" instrument. It accounts for nearly 20 percent of the whole body of interviews.

The "AG" and most subsequent questionnaires treated interviewees more as informants than as respondents. That is, in addition to being asked for their own personal opinions and about their own activities, they were asked to describe in detail what had been going on in military units in which they had served and in villages in which they had lived. The interviews thus contain many descriptions of the activities of guerrilla squads, Main Force companies, and Viet Cong village administrations, of propaganda conducted by the Viet Cong, and so on. As a result, while the interviews do not provide an adequate basis for calculating opinion distributions within the ranks of the Viet Cong, they do make it possible to construct composite pictures of what life was like and what was going on in various types of units and various parts of Vietnam. One could, for instance, extract from the interviews all information having to do with Viet Cong tax collection and--by checking back and forth among the various reports--come up with a fairly complete picture of how tax collection methods differed throughout Vietnam over time. It will be remembered that in the first few months of the project, the random sampling of respondents had to be abandoned in favor of sampling based on knowledgeability.

It should also be noted that the first two phases of the project were directed by political scientists who had not had previous experience in the administration of large-scale interview projects.

Although all had previously used interviews made by others, and were generally familiar with the literature on surveys, they still had a great deal to learn on the job. That made a fairly lengthy process of trial and error inevitable, especially in view of the difficult and constantly changing field conditions. The project could not proceed through the well-defined stages that are recommended in survey textbooks, including design, pretest, administration, and analysis, and that are customary in such studies carried out in the United States or Western Europe. Instead, it developed while actually being carried out, and some designs were still being experimented with well after partial analysis of preliminary results had begun. For the lack of "neatness" of the project those responsible offer no apologies, pointing out that the choice facing them was not whether or not to do it by the book, but whether or not to do it at all.

III. THE INTERVIEWERS

AN UNDERTAKING such as this is heavily dependent on the skill, integrity, and industry of its interviewers. In view of the difficult conditions that prevailed in Vietnam at the time, Rand had reason to be well satisfied on all counts.

The interviewers who served during the first phase of the project were recruited mainly from two sources. About half of them were Vietnamese academicians with whom the first field director had previously become acquainted when he taught in Saigon. Most of them had been born in North Vietnam and had gone south following the division of the country in 1954, or earlier. By religious preference, two were Roman Catholic and two others were Vietnamese traditionalists.* Except for one man, who had been trained as an engineer, all were social scientists.

Several additional interviewers during the first phase were obtained through a South Vietnamese social science research organization. Some of them had had previous experience in interviewing, and all had some training in the social sciences. Another interviewer was a long-time personal friend of a Rand consultant. The religious preferences of the members of this group are not known, but from the available information it would appear that they were about equally divided between Roman Catholics and Vietnamese traditionalists.

After phase one, the Vietnamese professors who had been working part-time with the project returned to their regular jobs, but four of the other interviewers stayed on through 1968. Many more were recruited

* Traditional religions in Vietnam include Buddhism, Confucianism, and ancestor worship. Many people, especially intellectuals, follow a mixture of the three traditions. Thus, a man might describe himself as a Confucian but might also observe some of the ceremonies of Buddhism or ancestor worship.

during phases two and three. Some of them were found through the same Vietnamese research organization that had assisted in phase one; others were recommended by interviewers already on the job; a few were previously known to Rand staff members who worked on the project or were discovered through mutual friends; at least one simply walked in and applied for a job, having heard about the project while working as a translator at a U.S. military installation; two others were referred to Rand by U.S. agencies in Vietnam. All interviewers were Vietnamese civilians and as far as could be determined had no overt or covert connections with the Saigon government, the South Vietnamese Army, the police, or the Viet Cong.

In all, about 40 interviewers served with the project during phases two and three, although from the available records it has been possible to reconstruct a list of only 36 names. At any one time, the number actually on the job was between 10 and 15. Quite a few stayed with the project for a few months, leaving to take other jobs. A few were released when they were found to lack the skills or motivation necessary for interviewing. A large majority of the interviews made during phases two and three were conducted by interviewers who stayed with the project for more than a year, and those were by and large the ones who did the best work, although some who left to take better jobs were also highly skilled.

Turnover among the interviewers would probably have been even greater if they had not been so well paid. Compensation varied somewhat according to age and experience, but in general those who stayed with the project for more than a few months received a salary comparable to what they would have received in the top ranks of the Vietnamese civil service. Their relatively high salary was justified on the grounds that they were being asked to do a skilled and difficult job in the face of hardship and danger.

As a very rough check on the extent to which interviewing expertise was distributed throughout the group, field directors and team leaders were asked in 1969 which interviewers they recalled as being most proficient--that is, most careful, reliable, and conscientious. In all, 18 names were mentioned, suggesting that most of the field directors and team leaders were satisfied with most interviewers.

Records on the backgrounds of the interviewers are incomplete, but it has been possible to reconstruct at least partial information for 36 of them, which is shown in Table 1. As the data indicate, the interviewers were highly diverse. They represented several different age, education, occupation, and religious groups. The most striking common characteristic was place of birth: 22 of the 36 were born in North Vietnam. That fact may be misleading, however. For the last few centuries there has been a steady migration of Vietnamese from the North to the South, and that migration--unconnected with the war--accounts for at least one of the "northerners," possibly more. The one in question left the North with his parents in 1932, and his entire education was in Saigon. Three of the "northerners," who had fought with the Viet Minh against the French, came to the South in connection with their resistance activities prior to 1954. Americans tend to have a stereotype of North Vietnamese in South Vietnam as Roman Catholics who fled to the South after the partition of the country in 1954. Only three of the interviewers were known to fit that stereotype, being both northerners and Roman Catholic; the great majority did not.

All the interviewers did share two important characteristics: they were city people and they were non-Communists. Urban background was a disadvantage in interviewing, since most respondents were country people, and it had to be compensated for through training and experience.

The fact that all were non-Communists does not indicate homogeneity of political opinion, which was highly diverse. At least three, although non-Communist by 1965, had fought with the Viet Minh, and had thus cooperated with the Communists during the colonial period, whether or not they had fully shared the communist point of view. The records on this score are far from complete, and it is probable that others had served with the Viet Minh as well. Some were relatively apolitical, being much more occupied with their personal and professional concerns than with politics. Those who were interested in politics tended to be highly critical of the Diem regime and its military successors. Three are known to have been jailed by the Diem government, one of them for six years.

Table 1

ATTRIBUTES OF INTERVIEWERS, PHASES TWO AND THREE,
1965-1968

Attribute	Number n = 36
<u>Sex</u>	
Male	27
Female	9
<u>Date of Birth</u>	
Before 1920	3
1920-1929	8
1930-1939	16
1940-1949	7
No data	2
<u>Place of Birth</u>	
North Vietnam	27
South Vietnam	5
Central Vietnam	6
Cambodia	1
No data	2
<u>Education</u>	
Completed Secondary School	5
Completed University (including Graduate School)	16
No data	15
<u>Previous Occupation</u>	
Secretarial or clerical	3
Professional	14
Business	3
Government service	2
South Vietnamese Army	6
Student	3
No data	5
<u>Religious Preference</u>	
Vietnamese traditional (mainly Buddhist)	14
Roman Catholic	7
Protestant	2
No data	13

In a document written in 1969, one of the former Vietnamese interviewers characterized the political outlook of the whole group as follows:

They all had different political viewpoints and backgrounds, but it can be said that they shared the following common characteristics. They were disenchanted with the GVN (Government of Vietnam), they were sympathetic to some of the goals of the Front (social justice, distribution of land to the peasants, a fairer distribution of wealth among the population, for example), they sympathized with the Front members and understood why they had chosen to join the Front. The interviewers could be called reformists, because they wanted to bring about social and political reforms, but without bloodshed. They all would prefer to see South Vietnam remain non-Communist, but some of them wondered whether we should pay any price to keep it so (whether we should continue the killing and destruction to drive the Communists out). Perhaps it can be said that they all wished to see their country become one day prosperous and democratic like Japan.

Another interviewer, also writing in 1969, took a much more militant stand. He believed that there was no alternative to a military victory over the Viet Cong and vigorously opposed withdrawal by the United States: "Right at the moment we thought that the Communists were at their critical moment, in other words, their breaking point, the U.S. Government has decided to make concessions. . . ."

The political and social diversity of the interviewers was demonstrated during the project by their strong tendency--in common with Vietnamese society as a whole--to associate in fairly small groups. All who stayed with the project for any length of time maintained smooth relations with their colleagues, but they preferred to work and to exchange experiences with some colleagues more than with others. For example, an American team leader mentioned that he did not ordinarily conduct group discussions about professional problems, since no two interviewers on his team saw eye-to-eye on certain political and social questions, and each preferred to review his work with his team leader in private. There were, of course, many group discussions among the interviewers, with and without Americans present, but such discussions

were more likely to occur if the group was composed of Vietnamese who happened to be most comfortable with each other.

The group of interviewers did not include any representatives of several large minorities in Vietnam--Montagnards, Chinese, or Cambodians, nor members of the powerful Hoa Hao or Cao Dai religious sects. Those directing the project did not consider that a disadvantage, since members of those sects and ethnic minorities did not play a prominent part in the National Liberation Front.

As the great majority of the Vietnamese staff had had no previous experience with interviewing, they had to go through training before they were entrusted with conducting interviews on their own. Ordinarily, a new interviewer would first serve as a translator. That is, an American staff member would ask a respondent questions in French or English, which the interviewer would translate into Vietnamese and then would translate the replies back into French or English. After several such sessions, the interviewer would conduct the conversation by himself and write up an interview report. He would then go over the report carefully with the team leader or field director, and they would talk over ways in which the interview might have been improved: whether he should have probed more, whether he failed to ask the respondent to explain inconsistencies, and so on. As the interviewer became more experienced, fewer review sessions were conducted, and finally his interviews would be subject only to routine checking and editing. After tape recorders were introduced in 1965, trainees also listened to tapes of prior interviews before going into the field themselves.

Training of a more informal nature was continuous. New interviewers often learned a great deal from their more experienced colleagues and sometimes sat in on interviews conducted by the latter. They were also encouraged to read interview reports that had already been written up. While in the field, away from Saigon, the team leaders and interviewers normally stayed at the same hotels and took their meals together. It was natural that conversations over lunch or dinner often concerned such problems as how to establish rapport, how to overcome bias, and how to determine what subjects the respondent was most knowledgeable about. The extent to which experiences were exchanged in these

conversations naturally depended on how close the interviewers felt to each other and to the American team leader, but since teams were composed, whenever possible, of people who enjoyed working together, there were often frank and penetrating discussions of problems encountered.

One of the first things that a city-bred interviewer had to learn was that many of his ideas about country folk were incorrect, and that he had to approach his task with an open mind. The first field director noted that many of the Vietnamese intellectuals with whom he worked started with the assumption that "we know our peasants." Very soon, however, those interviewers found that they had to change their opinions, and they developed far greater respect for the rural population. A former Vietnamese staff member wrote in 1969:

To the interviewers, the majority of whom were city people, the interviews were real eye openers. They understood better the appalling conditions in the countryside, which they had only dimly perceived before. This knowledge discouraged most of them, but at the same time they became hopeful that the information they uncovered would help our side alleviate these conditions and thereby reduce the appeal of the Viet Cong Front to the peasants.

Another wrote along similar lines:

Most interviewers personally benefited from these studies, in that they had a chance to visit many parts of the country. These field trips, so exhausting sometimes, were eye openers for many. They learned first hand how the war was being conducted and how the people felt about it. They also acquired more intimate knowledge of Viet Cong organization and Viet Cong morale. They had an idea why the VC had become so attractive to their countrymen, regardless of age, religion, and social status. In the end, they became more aware of the strong and weak points of their side and in a way became more concerned politically.

It is apparent from examining the interview reports that nearly all the interviewers, certainly all who stayed with the project more than a few months, overcame the stereotype that the educated city dweller has of his country cousins. Many of the reports describe long and rather cordial conversations infused with mutual respect.

In part because interviewing was a challenging task, morale among the interviewers appears to have been good. Interviewers were given to understand that they should adhere to the questionnaires where possible but should also feel free to follow up promising leads with new questions and to omit others where appropriate. Sometimes, an interviewer would discover that his respondent was knowledgeable in a subject that was not covered by the questionnaire and would frame additional questions on the spur of the moment. Closed-end questions, which were attempted on several occasions, proved less interesting. Toward the end of the project, a number of new questionnaires on specialized subjects were introduced, and some of the interviewers felt that they did not have time to master one subject before being asked to start studying another.

Relations with American staff members also made a difference in morale. By and large, relations between Vietnamese and American personnel seem to have been excellent, with, of course, varying degrees of rapport between different personalities. One frequent complaint of the interviewers was that the American staff became more and more enmeshed in administrative responsibilities as the project went on, and that consequently American personnel had less time to read and discuss the interview reports. Adding to the interviewers' feeling that their work was less appreciated was the fact that the time between their own write-up and distribution of the completed report became longer and longer as editing, typing, and reproduction facilities became overloaded. Sometimes it was as much as two months between completion of an interview and distribution of the report.

A third factor that both raised and lowered morale was the idealism of most of the interviewers. They felt that their work was important. If it opened *their* eyes about conditions in the countryside and on the battlefield, what would the effect be on officials in Saigon and Washington who read the reports! Yet, as the years went on, they began to doubt that the reports had very much impact. Those who were primarily interested in social reform saw many of the old inequities in the countryside still prevailing. Those who were primarily interested in defeating the Viet Cong saw the same military mistakes being repeated.

There were some signs of progress in both the social and military realms, but it was not possible to link them directly to the project. Gnawing questions remained: Was the project really doing any good? Was it a waste of time and effort?

Interviewers who went into the field--as nearly all did--were subjected to severe discomforts and real danger. Some of the field directors and team leaders who were contacted in 1969 mentioned the hardships but did not see them as depressing morale; indeed, the opposite may have been the case. None of them mentioned the dangers, although some team leaders recalled that relatives of interviewers had occasionally objected when field trips were taken to areas that were considered insecure.

The most important question regarding the interviewers is the extent to which their own biases affected the content of the reports they wrote. In view of the latitude given the interviewers to structure most sessions as they thought best, bias cannot be excluded, even with the best intentions and the most rigorous training. Nevertheless, it can be said with confidence that virtually all of the interviewers tried to be objective and to present information as accurately as they could. One of the field directors wrote in 1969:

I do not think that the interviewers deliberately tried to slant their interviews to fit their own political viewpoint or to feed false information to the Americans in order to affect U.S. policy or veer it in the direction they wanted to see it go.

The fact that all the interviewers were Vietnamese nationalists worked against any tendency that might have existed to "give the Americans what they want." To quote again from the same person:

There was amusement and even perverse pleasure in finding out that the Americans were failing so miserably in their efforts to cope with the NLF (composed of Vietnamese), especially when the Americans had raised so many criticisms of the Vietnamese in general so often. Therefore, it cannot be said that the interviewers, being

non-Communists, deliberately pictured the Front in the worst light or made counterinsurgency efforts look more effective than they really were.

Devotion to their country probably moved interviewers to represent conditions as accurately as possible. Another Vietnamese interviewer wrote: "They felt that if the information was used properly, perhaps, they hoped, it would bring peace sooner to this long-suffering country."

None of the field directors or team leaders reported finding cases of intentional inaccuracy on the part of any interviewer. They did recognize that bias was present and sought to reduce its effects. One team leader recalled that he had found it difficult to persuade an interviewer to stop inserting prejudicial questions. The interviewer believed that the way to defeat the Viet Cong was to arm the villagers, and on several occasions asked questions along the following lines: "If you were given arms to defend yourself, you would use them, wouldn't you?" The user of the reports will usually be able to spot such prejudicial questions and allow for their effect, since they are included in the writeups. There is the possibility that a biased question might have been asked but then altered in the written report so as to appear less biased. No such instances were noted by any team leader, however, and they probably occurred very rarely, if at all.

On balance, one would expect the non-Communist sentiments of the interviewers to show up in one way or another in the reports. Nevertheless, the existence of several very different political biases among the group, even though all were non-Communists, probably serves to offset bias in the interviews as a whole. One interviewer was accused by Vietnamese authorities who overheard part of an interview of being pro-Communist, and a team leader reported that on several occasions his interviewers had been followed by agents of the Saigon government. Therefore the user, while he should be alert to the effects of interviewer bias--as he should be in any survey of this type--cannot assume that the bias is extreme or that its effects are uniform throughout the interviews.

IV. THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS

Field Work

IN THE COURSE of the project, interviews were conducted at approximately forty locations throughout South Vietnam, although Saigon, My Tho, and Bien Hoa were the sites of a disproportionately large share. In addition, interviewing teams were taken to Danang, Can Tho, Bac Lieu, and Hué. All parts of the country are thus represented in the interviews, although some areas are better represented than others.

The logistics of field work presented problems. The field director who served until the middle of 1967 recalled in 1969 that despite sponsorship by the U.S. Defense Department the interview project was regarded as a fifth wheel by the American and Vietnamese military authorities. "Our ability to obtain what we needed was limited, and required a great deal of wheeling and dealing. I think it is important to make clear that we were not in a position to do whatever we wanted or to talk to whomever we wanted."

Military air transport had to be used to reach most interview sites, both because of the long distances involved and because many roads were unsafe for civilian travel. During the first two years of the project, the usual procedure in arranging for air transport was to telephone one of the U.S. military units in Saigon and reserve space for interviewers and a team leader on a scheduled or non-scheduled aircraft that was expected to fly to the specified location. Those arrangements worked about three-quarters of the time, but often involved long delays. A team would arrive at the Saigon airport at 7 a.m., as instructed, only to have to wait until noon for the plane to take off.

In other cases, the plane in question would be diverted to a different mission, or would have mechanical difficulties. If the team could not hitch a ride on some other aircraft, it would have to return to downtown Saigon and try to make arrangements for the next day.

Once having arrived at the destination airfield, the team was faced with the problem of finding ground transportation. Efforts were usually made to arrange for it by telephone before departure, but the necessary transportation materialized only about half the time. That was partly because of temperamental long-distance telephone service, which made it very difficult to reach offices outside Saigon and to understand what was said once a connection had been made, and partly because U.S. military advisors who were supposed to provide ground transportation were themselves very short of vehicles and were faced with conflicting demands. Thus, teams very often had to hitchhike from local airfields to town, or use the local Vietnamese civilian bus service, where it existed, or would have to walk several miles into town. Vietnamese civilians in the countryside were usually friendly and helpful, and sometimes were able to help stranded teams find transport.

Teams usually stayed in a town four to six days, and therefore had to find food and lodging. Occasionally it was possible to make reservations at local Vietnamese hotels in advance. More often, the team simply arrived and searched for a place to stay. The place usually turned out to be a small inn that afforded few comforts. Rooms were bare cubicles containing little more than a wooden bed with no springs and a straw mattress. The walls of the rooms extended only part way to the ceiling, assuring circulation of air but also of noise, insects, and odors. Sanitary facilities and standards of hygiene varied widely. The urban Vietnamese interviewers were as unaccustomed to these conditions as were the American team leaders, and all nearly always returned from the field trips exhausted, having slept very few hours each night.* When local hotels were full, the Vietnamese city or province authorities

* A former field director, after reading this paragraph commented: "Your description is quite charitable, and certainly understates the problems of noise, dirt, and heat."

were sometimes able to provide a guest house or schoolrooms in which to bed down. When all else failed, the Vietnamese interviewers bargained with local civilians for accommodations.

Finding food was no problem, but finding a meal that was both safe and palatable was something else again. A few provincial cities boasted fine restaurants, but most of the smaller places offered little cheer for the gourmet. Teams were forced to eat at places where standards of cleanliness were low and thus were subject to frequent stomach upsets. Again, the Vietnamese interviewers seemed to be as much affected as the Americans.

Added to these annoyances was an element of danger. A team leader recalled the last day of a field trip to Bac Lieu, when the whole group decided to repair to a local cafe in the center of town to await transportation to the airfield. On the way to the cafe, one of the interviewers remembered that he wanted to ask a few more questions of a Viet Cong captive who was being held in a police station across the road from the cafe. He entered the building, and the rest waited outside. While they were waiting, a bomb exploded in the cafe toward which they had been heading, with heavy loss of life to the Vietnamese civilians who had been taking afternoon tea. The team did what they could to assist with first aid for the wounded, then proceeded--somewhat shaken--to the airfield. Other teams found themselves uncomfortably close to sudden fire fights, and one landed at an airfield that had been shelled a few minutes earlier.

The return trips to Saigon involved even more difficulties than outbound travel. One field director recalled in 1969: "In one instance we had completed our interviews in My Tho by evening, and the plane we were scheduled to take did not stop for us. After considerable difficulty, we located a Chinese merchant who provided a car to go into Saigon. The drive went into the night, and a number of the interviewers expressed serious misgivings about traveling on the dangerous road." In spite of such misgivings, the teams often resorted to road transportation on return trips if the town they were visiting was within easy driving distance of Saigon. When the distance was too great, the only thing to do was to wait. One team spent five days waiting for return air transportation from Nha Trang.

Sometimes teams had to split up in order to obtain return transportation. An interviewer recalled having hitched a ride in a "standing room only" cargo plane. The plane was bringing back the corpses of slain Vietnamese officers for burial in Saigon, and the bodies had apparently been left for several days in the hot sun. The odor made many of the standees sick, although the interviewer managed to overcome nausea by smoking his pipe furiously.

During the last two years of the project, air transportation improved significantly, and some of the teams started carrying their own food with them. But ground transportation in the field remained a problem, and provincial hotels became no more luxurious. In retrospect, both team leaders and interviewers agreed that the physical discomforts of field trips did not significantly affect their morale or the quality of their work, but that the long delays did. Hours spent waiting for air or ground transportation often meant that the staff had to rush through interviews. On some occasions, they broke off interviews prematurely to get to the airfield at the appointed time--only to find the plane delayed. When asked in 1969 how the project might have been improved, all the interviewers without exception replied: "Better transportation arrangements."

How Respondents Were Selected

Except for a brief period during the first phase of the project, at no time were respondents selected by random procedures. Instead, interviewers and American personnel tried to find respondents who were knowledgeable about particular subjects. For example, those who had spent several years in the political or military organization of the Viet Cong were much sought after, whether they were prisoners or defectors. The same was true of men who had lived in a particular village for a long time and knew the conditions there. The typical undesirable respondent (because he had so little to say) was a young man who had spent all his time farming or fishing in a remote area, was forcibly recruited into the Viet Cong military, and had defected

or been captured after several weeks. Any random or representative sample of either prisoners or defectors would have included a majority of such respondents of low utility.

In choosing respondents from the ranks of the "knowledgeable," team leaders and interviewers working on the "AG" series were asked to try to observe the following guidelines: maintain a balance of approximately half prisoners and half defectors; obtain about 25 percent of respondents from each of the four military corps areas into which South Vietnam is divided; find roughly equal numbers of North Vietnamese soldiers, Viet Cong Main Force soldiers, Viet Cong Local Force soldiers, guerrillas, and members of Viet Cong civilian agencies; and concentrate on cadres (those in any leadership position). Respondents in the "AGR" series, all refugees, came closer to being a cross-section of Vietnamese society, since the team leader who was responsible for collecting most of the interviews in this series tried--using his own judgment rather than systematic sampling procedures--to obtain a representative sample of the populace in refugee villages. In choosing respondents for most other interview series (which were narrower than "AGR" in subject matter), the team leaders simply tried to get people who were most knowledgeable about the subject under investigation, whether they were prisoners, defectors, South Vietnamese, or North Vietnamese.

Finding knowledgeable respondents was not easy. The most serious drawback was that no comprehensive or reliable lists of either prisoners or defectors could be found in Saigon. Furthermore, few Vietnamese or American officials in Saigon ever really understood the purpose of the project. Most of them seem to have regarded it as an intelligence-gathering undertaking rather than a long-range study of political, social, and psychological factors. Consequently, they found it difficult to recommend persons to be interviewed. As a team leader recalled, "most hot tips in Saigon led to wild goose chases." Nevertheless, some information about potential respondents could be collected in Saigon before setting out on field trips. It came not only from Vietnamese and American officials, but also from personal acquaintances of Rand staff members or interviewers and from military or civilian personnel who had just returned from the field. The problem was much

more easily solved when potential respondents were physically present in the Saigon area. Then it was usually possible to decide whether to use them by calling officials at the Chieu Hoi Center (where defectors were lodged) or at one of the military prisons. Vietnamese officials at the Saigon Chieu Hoi Center came to understand what sort of respondents were sought, and were most helpful. That was less true in the case of military prisoners. Not infrequently, an interviewer would arrive at a prison only to find that the captive he had come to talk with had been transferred somewhere else, or was not as represented. (For example, prison officials sometimes claimed that a given person was a Viet Cong officer, but the interviewer would find that he was merely suspected of being one, and the prisoner would deny having anything to do with the Viet Cong at all.) While work in Saigon was easier, only a very small proportion of prisoners or defectors were ever brought there, so most interviews had to be made in other locations.

When a team set out on a field trip, it had some reason to believe that "interesting" respondents would be available, but no assurance. A team leader's report is illustrative:

In January 1965, I requested information from the U.S. Military Assistance Command as to the location of some prisoners to interview. I was told that thirty or forty had just been captured in an operation in Bac Lieu. Unusually fast arrangements were made and the team departed one and one-half days later for Bac Lieu. On arrival, only seven prisoners were still in the stockade. The remainder had either been released, or had been sent to the provincial prison in Can Tho. Only three were considered worth interviewing, and the team departed for Can Tho the following afternoon. About ten Viet Cong suspects, who had recently been transferred from Bac Lieu were found in the Can Tho prison. They were classified only as suspects, however, and refused to admit that they knew anything about Viet Cong operations or had been active members. They knew that they were to go before a provincial board, which would hopefully release them. Quite understandably, they refused to provide any information, so we then turned to the Chieu Hoi Center.

Quite often, the search for a particularly knowledgeable respondent became something of a detective story. A field director recalled that he had traced a Viet Cong Senior Captain from prison to prison before finally locating him. Then he was told that the Captain was uncooperative and would not talk. When he finally was taken to see the Captain, the latter proved to be sympathetic to the purposes of the study and was able to contribute substantially to the field director's understanding of certain aspects and certain periods of the Viet Cong movement. On numerous occasions, one respondent would recommend another as being particularly knowledgeable about certain subjects. Then the problem was to locate the second man.

Thus, the most informative interviews were usually a result of chance plus diligent searching. A team leader gives a graphic example from 1968:

There are rumors of 5,000 political prisoners held on Con Son Island. Checking with police advisors confirms them. We obtain a list of 28 prisoners to talk with, but when we arrive on the island we discover that "nobody ever heard of them." We plow through 3,500 dossiers, over 40 percent of which have *tin h nghi* (suspect) entered in them [making them unusable]. We screen 350 subjects, talk at greater length with 80, interview 35, and obtain 29 usable interviews.

Interviewers often had to talk with whichever respondents happened to be available in the area they were visiting, even though some of them might not be particularly knowledgeable. It was possible to pick and choose somewhat more among defectors than among prisoners, since defectors were more numerous and because Vietnamese prison or police officials were not always cooperative in providing information about all the prisoners for whom they were responsible. Among refugees, wide choice was nearly always possible within a single refugee village. Different Rand personnel seem to have had rather different experiences in finding respondents. One recalled that several Vietnamese installations had kept quite good lists of prisoners and defectors; another reported: "We found most good subjects purely by chance."

The team of interviewers who resided in My Tho during the 1965-1967 phase and who produced most reports in the "DT" series, had a greater range of choice than the others. Because they stayed in one town, they built up a wide range of personal contacts and learned about most of the knowledgeable sources in the area, including prisoners, defectors, and members of the civilian population. They were therefore able to choose respondents who were likely to be informative.

Complicating the problem of selecting knowledgeable sources was the necessity of securing permission from Vietnamese officials to work in each prisoner-of-war installation, police station, defector center, and refugee village. The officials were usually cooperative, except in the case of a few police installations, but securing their concurrence often took considerable time. It was not uncommon for a team to arrive at a given location, thinking that its visit had been cleared in advance through U.S. liaison channels, only to find that the local Vietnamese officials had not heard that the team was coming. The purpose of the project then had to be explained, which cut further into the time available for actual interviewing on field trips.

Conduct of the Interviews

Once permission to work in a given location had been obtained and respondents had been selected, the problem arose of where to talk to them. Privacy was desirable but could not always be assured. Sometimes separate rooms were available in prisons or police stations, but even when they were used, Vietnamese officials might pop in and out, ostensibly on errands unrelated to the interviews, and there was always the possibility that the rooms were bugged. When private rooms were not available, the interview would have to be conducted in a corner of a larger room, or in a vestibule. Under those conditions, both interviewer and respondent might be distracted by extraneous noise and traffic, and in some cases the noise level was so high as to make it impossible to tape the interview.

Conditions in Chieu Hoi Centers were also difficult. Separate rooms were rarely available, and finding a secluded corner was not

easy. On a few occasions an interview was started in reasonable privacy, which was shattered when other defectors, curious about what was going on, came to join in. On balance, however, it was easier to find a reasonably private place to interview defectors than to interview prisoners. The defectors were free to come and go, and when the weather was fine interviews were sometimes conducted under a tree or in a meadow. One of the most senior interviewers summarized working conditions in the following way:

The ideal working condition is that the interviewer is able to converse with a subject in a private place. The presence of a third person always makes the subject ill at ease, and makes him tend to say not what he thinks, but what he believes he ought to think. In the case of refugees, we were able to take them to a hotel to interview them, when we had transportation. In the case of defectors, we would find an isolated corner on a veranda, or in the court of the Chieu Hoi Center. But often the rain or the sun did not allow us to do this. As far as prisoners are concerned, it is almost always impossible to find an isolated corner in the police station or prisoner camps. If, by chance, we are able to isolate ourselves with the respondent, the officials or the interrogators belonging to the installation in question will not leave us alone. They nearly always try to eavesdrop on the conversation between the interviewer and the subject, and sometimes even intervene in the interview.

In 1969, team leaders were asked to estimate roughly the proportion of interviews their teams conducted where privacy was "assured," "good but not assured," and "poor." Averaging their responses, we find that privacy was "assured" in about 55 percent of the interviews, "poor" in 22 percent of the interviews, and somewhere in between in the remaining 23 percent. The "DT" series shows the largest proportion of "privacy assured"--the estimate is 90 percent--because most of its respondents were defectors with whom interviews could often be held at the house in My Tho where some of the interviewers lived.

When a place had been found to talk, the interviewers introduced themselves. The manner of introduction varied widely, depending on the purposes of the questionnaire that was being used, the preferences of the interviewer, and sometimes the type of respondent. Nearly

always, they stated in one way or another the basic purpose of the interview--that it was part of a study of the National Liberation Front and of the social situation in South Vietnam. A Vietnamese-speaking American team leader, who conducted a substantial number of interviews himself during the first phase of the project, described the policy during that phase as follows:

The interviewers were coached to introduce themselves to respondents as persons studying the social, economic, and political situation in Vietnam, in order to understand the National Liberation Front and its position vis-à-vis the Government of Vietnam. This varied in wording among interviewers. I think that most respondents were dubious about the veracity of this claim and accepted the interview as one more chore imposed on them. . . . When pressed as to the exact auspices of the project, the interviewers usually described in general terms a research organization under contract to the government.

The field director during the first phase added something to the introduction: "The interviewer pointed out that he had no connection with the immediate authorities of the interview site (defector center, prison, etc.), and that the results of the specific interview would not be made available to these authorities. The interview, it was pointed out, would neither help nor hurt the interviewee."

During later phases of the project it was left up to the individual interviewer how to introduce himself, but the "neither help nor hurt" formula and the emphasis on confidentiality were always included. As far as can be determined, the form of introduction did not make very much difference in the subsequent course of the interview; it was obvious to all respondents that the interviewer had some connection with either Vietnamese or American authorities. A Vietnamese interviewer who stayed with the project all four years described the process of explaining the study this way:

Most subjects were curious about who the interviewers were, who they worked for, what they were going to do with the information they received, and most important if the information would be used against them later. To reassure subjects, interviewers made it clear that their names were

of no importance . . . and would not be divulged. At the same time, they could not expect any reward. The interviewer would be very grateful to them for their cooperation, but if they decided to remain uncommunicative, the interviewer would understand and there would be no complaint against them. . . . To return to the subjects' curiosity as to the identity of the interviewers, here again there was no pat answer. Some interviewers claimed that they were reporters. Others introduced themselves as researchers for a private U.S. organization. . . . Some subjects asked why a U.S. organization, and the answer was: only the United States was rich enough to sponsor such world-wide and expensive projects. Still others posed as social science students doing research for their oncoming theses. . . . Whether the respondents believed these claims or not, they never questioned them.

Part of that explanation necessarily came at the beginning of each interview; part came later as the respondent gained confidence and as his curiosity about the purpose of the interview mounted.

Before getting into the interview proper, the interviewer spent a few minutes--or sometimes quite a lot of time--trying to establish a friendly and relaxed atmosphere, and to build rapport. Each interviewer had his own way of doing it, but most followed the same general procedure. They would bring with them a package of cigarettes and sometimes candy and soft drinks, which they offered to the respondent. Some nonsmoking interviewers went so far as to smoke a cigarette with the respondent. They also usually inquired about the respondent's health, his family, and the treatment he was receiving. One interviewer recalled that he once found an apparently uncooperative respondent to be suffering from a high fever. Thereupon he went out, found a doctor, brought him to the Chieu Hoi Center, and purchased the medicine that he prescribed for the respondent. Most interviewees responded well to this friendly approach, but a substantial minority did not. In some cases dedicated members of the Viet Cong refused to smoke American cigarettes, although they would accept Vietnamese brands.

Several interviewers found that to build rapport it was important to make it clear that they were not government "interrogators." Many prisoners had been mishandled or even tortured during earlier interrogation sessions, and some defectors had been treated roughly, or at

least without respect, so respondents were naturally apprehensive. Sometimes the offer of a cigarette alone was enough to dispel this apprehension, since government interrogators rarely allowed smoking.

If the suspicions and apprehension of the respondent were not allayed during the preliminaries, they were likely to be quieted as the interview progressed. One reason was the nature of the questions themselves, which differed sharply from those asked by military or police interrogators. Also important was the language chosen by the interviewers. In Vietnamese, the pronoun form used in addressing someone clearly indicates the attitude of the speaker toward that person. Interviewers always used respectful forms in addressing respondents and in referring to the National Liberation Front, and they never condemned any past activities of the person they were talking to. They also listened respectfully. As one interviewer put it: "We always avoided interrupting a respondent, even when his remarks were beside the point or when he was propagandizing us or criticizing us. We did not allow ourselves to show impatience, to show annoyance, or to use a tone of reproach. We let them know that they could refuse absolutely to reply to any question if they did not wish to give a response." In other words, the tone and approach used, as well as the substance of the interview, sharply differentiated those sessions from military or police interrogations.

Tape recorders were used in about half the interviews--less often in the earlier ones and more often in the later ones. Their use sometimes led to nervousness on the part of the respondent, which the interviewer tried to allay by pointing out that the machine was being used merely to secure an accurate record, and that confidences would be respected. If the interviewer had no recorder, or if it malfunctioned, or if the respondent refused to speak into the microphone (that rarely happened), the interviewer took notes. Some took fuller notes than others, and some had better memories than others, all of which naturally affected the completeness and accuracy of the interview reports.

Having begun the interview proper, the interviewer would probe for the subjects on which the respondent seemed most knowledgeable. There was no requirement that all the questions be asked, and the interviewer

could devise new questions as long as they did not stray too far from the general outline, which all interviewers knew by heart. Questions often had to be rephrased several times and explained to the respondent at some length, especially when the respondent seemed to have a low level of intelligence. If the interviewer concluded that the respondent was not knowledgeable on any area with which the study was concerned, or that he was merely spinning yarns, or that he would persist in being uncooperative, the interview was terminated. For all those reasons, the length and substance of the interview reports vary widely, even within the same series.

Reliability and Validity

Did the respondents tell the truth? Obviously, some of them did not, but the interviewers made strenuous attempts to secure valid information. Their best assurance of not being deceived lay in their familiarity with the subject matter. Most of them, having conducted a great many interviews themselves and having read interview reports by others, could detect answers that were likely to be untruthful or evasive. They also were alert to inconsistencies, and asked respondents to explain them. When confronted with what they believed was an untruthful or evasive answer to a question, most interviewers would repeat the question, with some variations, at different times in the course of the interview, and if they received different answers they requested clarification. In some cases the interviewer would simply tell the respondent that his replies did not sound truthful and would remind him that he did not have to reply at all if he did not wish to. That tactic led sometimes to acceptable answers and sometimes to termination of the interview.

Efforts to obtain truthful answers may in some cases have backfired. One possibility, pointed out by a team leader, is that experienced interviewers sometimes believed that they already knew the "correct" answer to a question and would press the respondent to come up with a reply that was consistent with it. In thus guiding replies, interviewers may have overlooked regional peculiarities or individual

aberrations, with the result that interview reports may show greater uniformity than is justified. Another possibility is that respondents were overly encouraged to speak kindly of the Viet Cong. They may have learned that pro-Viet Cong statements were usually credited, and that anti-Viet Cong statements were received with suspicion. If, for example, the respondent appeared to be parroting pro-government propaganda, the interviewer might chide him by saying that he could get that "line" direct from the Saigon government. Furthermore, criticisms of the Saigon government were usually received as indication of the respondent's sincerity. Thus, interviewers' own efforts to overcome an anti-Viet Cong bias may have led them to a pro-Viet Cong bias. A field director noted that, quite aside from the possible biasing effects of the interview situation, some Viet Cong tended more and more to idealize their previous life as guerrillas the longer they remained in captivity.

All interviewers and team leaders agreed that in general defectors were easier to interview than captives. Nevertheless, they also agreed that within the two broad categories there were many nuances, and that the label "prisoner" or "defector" can mislead. Defectors in particular were of many kinds. An interviewer commented in 1969:

One of the objections that might be raised . . . could be that defectors, since they had left the National Liberation Front, must all have been unsympathetic to the Front and favorably disposed toward the Saigon government. The truth, however, is that almost all the defectors took this step for personal reasons--very few did so for ideological reasons--and not because they supported the government. Most of them still thought that in many ways the Front was better than the government. Generally speaking, these respondents were not as honest when talking about themselves as when they dealt with other issues less personal. For example, they might not tell the truth as to the real reasons for their defection, especially if they had done something very wrong--such as embezzlement, lewdness, etc.--while in the Front. When they talked about issues less personal, they were more frank.

The same interviewer divided respondents (except for refugees and civilians) into ten categories, which appear to be consistent with the perceptions of other interviewers and the team leaders.

1. Defectors and prisoners who were cooperative but who tried to ingratiate themselves with the interviewers by telling them what they thought the interviewers would like to hear, or gave the government "line" to prove that they had made a clean break with the Front.
2. Defectors who were cooperative, but whose allegiance was still to the Front. They were willing to discuss every issue at length, but were biased in favor of the Front.
3. Hard-core prisoners who were cooperative, but were biased in favor of the Front.
4. Hard-core prisoners who were cooperative, but more objective. They could see the bad as well as the good side of the Front.
5. Defectors who had definitely made a clean break with the Front and who were completely cooperative. Some had become so disenchanted and angered that they were biased against the Front. But others, though equally disenchanted, could still retain their objectivity and gave a more objective evaluation. They usually volunteered additional information that the interviewers had not thought of asking for.
6. Prisoners who were "potential defectors." They were cooperative, but their degree of objectivity varied from a very biased (and sometimes emotional) condemnation of the Front to a more detached and objective evaluation.
7. Prisoners and defectors with a strong allegiance to the Front, who were cooperative but who deliberately tried to propagandize the interviewers. They had been trained to take advantage of every occasion to proselytize the "enemy," and the interviews provided them with an opportunity to do so.
8. Defectors and prisoners who were hostile and uncooperative. They had been told not to give information to the "enemy," and so denied knowing anything. They applied the Front's "three no's" technique: "I don't know anything; I have never noticed anything; and I have never heard anything." They were frustrating to deal with. There was nothing we could do to make them talk.
9. Defectors and prisoners who were willing to talk, but who lied or gave contradictory answers to confuse the interviewers. They were as difficult to deal with as the category just above, and were even more frustrating to interview.

10. Defectors and prisoners who were melancholic, or completely wrapped up in personal problems and worries concerning the future of their families and themselves, or who were so tired and disgusted with being interrogated and interviewed that they could not face another session. These people were uncooperative in that they had no desire to talk, gave laconic answers, in order to end the interview as quickly as possible. Every answer had to be pried out of them. Questions sometimes had to be repeated many times, and there was usually a long silence before they bothered to answer.

Dimensions of cooperativeness (or willingness to answer questions), objectivity, and political bias thus cut across the categories of defectors and prisoners. While defectors were more likely to be cooperative, interviewers had to be as watchful of the degree of objectivity and political bias in them as in the prisoners.

All concerned were curious about the effect of American sponsorship on the quality of information obtained. American team leaders or field directors were physically present at 150 to 200 of the interviews, or about 10 percent. At many of those sessions they asked questions themselves, with the interviewer serving as interpreter. The Vietnamese-speaking team leaders, of course, preferred not to go through the translation process, although they usually asked an interviewer to be present to be sure that they did not miss anything. Even when an American did not take part in an interview, his presence at the interview site and the fact that he was working with the interviewers might be known to respondents. That was true in about another 50 percent of the cases. Sometimes interviewers mentioned that they were working with an American organization. In other words, there were relatively few cases in which American sponsorship was completely unknown to the respondent, even though it usually was not very salient. What effect the various degrees of American involvement had is not known. Most interviewers felt that interviews were better when an American was not physically present, and common sense would support this view. A team leader reported: "Often the interviewers felt that the respondents took a stronger anti-American or pro-Viet Cong position when Americans were present or nearby." On the other hand, the kinds of information obtained by Vietnamese-speaking

Americans, or by Americans working through interpreters, did not seem to differ from the information obtained by Vietnamese interviewers working alone. Relatively subtle differences might show up, however, if a systematic analysis of the interview reports could be made, using degree of American involvement as one variable.

In a few cases, the presence of an American seems to have helped, rather than hurt, the interviewing process. A team leader reported that some respondents seemed to be gratified that people from a distant and powerful nation were interested in their experiences and opinions. A very different kind of effect was suggested by only one interviewer, who recalled the following incident:

One day several of us, accompanied by an American team leader, went to interview refugees in a village in Dinh Tuong Province. During the whole morning we noticed that the refugees, recently arrived from a village controlled by the Viet Cong, were not very cooperative and were evasive in their responses. As it happened, that day was the anniversary day of the *Than Hoang* (God) of the village, so the Village Chief invited us to a meal in the *Dinh Lang* (communal house). There the altar of the *Than Hoang* had been erected. The Village Chief, considering our team leader to be a "personality," invited him to render homage to the *Than Hoang*, an honor reserved only to venerable citizens and to persons occupying high social positions in the village. Our team leader, without hesitating, went before the altar, burned some bags of incense, and prostrated himself several times, exactly as a Vietnamese would have done. After the meal, and during the whole afternoon, we were agreeably surprised to find that all our respondents had changed their attitude and had become very cooperative and obliging.

That incident certainly cannot be regarded as typical, but it serves as a reminder that the interviews were also affected by religious and cultural factors, of which there may be no mention at all in the interview reports.

V. PREPARATION OF THE INTERVIEW REPORTS

WHEN HE RETURNED FROM THE FIELD, or from an interview in the Saigon area, the interviewer sat down to write his report. Using his notes, his taped record of the conversation, or both, he attempted to reconstruct the interview. Small talk, obvious redundancies, and elaborate explanations of questions could be omitted, but otherwise he was supposed to include anything that might possibly be relevant to understanding the Viet Cong and the social and political conditions in South Vietnam. Some interviewers preferred to group the replies to related questions. Their reports would list five or six questions about a single topic, and then a lengthy response touching on all of them. Other interviewers reported the actual sequence of questions and answers. In most series both the questions and replies are written out, although in part of the "Z" series only the question numbers are given, not the full questions.

The language used by the interviewer in writing his report varied. About a dozen interviewers, most of whom were with the project two years or more, were so fluent in English that they were able to produce English drafts directly from their Vietnamese tapes and notes. Another nine or ten preferred to do a first draft in French. (Two of them later switched to English.) The balance wrote in Vietnamese.

Drafts that were written in French or Vietnamese were given to translators, some of whom worked in the Rand Saigon office and some of whom worked part-time at home. Some translators had been teachers of English; others worked for Saigon English-language newspapers. A number of reports from phase one were left in French, since all Americans with the project at that time could use French easily.

The draft reports then usually went to the team leader who had made the arrangements for the interviews in question. He edited them lightly,

conferring with the interviewer when he had questions about meaning or the accuracy of a translation. The edited version was then typed up in final form.

In practice, it was not always possible for the team leader to do the editing and checking. Some team leaders became overburdened or had to leave on field trips before they had finished reviewing the previous batch of interview reports. In such cases, the field director or a professional editor in the Rand Saigon office would take care of editing and checking. That became more customary during the last two years of the project, although the team leaders still reviewed the reports. In about half the cases there was double editing: the team leader would go over a report quickly and then would pass it to the editor for more detailed attention.

All those steps provided generous opportunities for error. In the opinion of team leaders and field directors, most inaccuracies in the interview reports resulted from illegible tapes, inadequate notes when no tape was made, and the sometimes lengthy gap between the time interviews were made and the time they were written up. Several of the American personnel recalled cases where different respondents had been shown as giving almost identical replies to a given question by the same interviewer. In those cases it was assumed that the interviewer's notes were incomplete and that he had reconstructed a "typical" answer from a brief notation or from memory. Also, it was found in a number of instances that relevant information had been left out, either because the interviewer did not consider it important or had forgotten it. However, no staff member could recall having encountered any case in which answers were *intentionally* modified or relevant information *intentionally* omitted. One team leader came away with the suspicion that a few interviewers had occasionally slanted their reports in the direction they thought would please the American personnel, but he had no proof. He further conceded that in any case the practice was abandoned as tape recorders came into wider use and as it became clear that the American staff had such diverse opinions that it was impossible to please them all. Some interviewers noted that even with tape recorders they found it difficult to remember which nonverbal responses (grimaces, gestures) to associate with which respondents.

The personalities and working habits of the interviewers naturally influenced the shape of their reports. Some produced almost verbatim transcripts, leaving in much duplication. Others took full notes and yet had difficulty recalling the total context. Still others took rather sparse notes but had such prodigious memories that they were able to produce relatively complete reports.

Translation represented another hurdle. The most common errors were terminological. For instance, the Hamlet Farmers' Association Committee was often translated in early interviews as "Hamlet Civil Affairs Committee." Sometimes a new term appeared in several forms before a satisfactory standardized translation was settled on. In such cases the original Vietnamese term should have been included, but it rarely was. In another case it was found that a female interviewer had for two years confused the terms "sergeant" and "corporal," giving the higher rank to the latter. As these examples indicate, most translation errors--while annoying--are seldom major.

Two more important difficulties were associated with translation. For one thing, no English equivalents exist for many Vietnamese grammatical forms showing respect and disrespect, and expressions that carry a load of powerful emotion lose that load in even the most accurate translation. Similar problems occur with many Vietnamese idioms and adjectives. As a result, it was difficult to retain the original flavor of statements made by respondents, especially if the statements had first been put into French and then into English. A field director observed: "Mr. A wrote in literary French. Lord knows what the man originally told him in colloquial Vietnamese." Compounding the problem of tone was the penchant of some translators (and interviewers who wrote in English) for experimenting with English idioms. Readers of the reports may be surprised to learn that the Viet Cong forces, when moving through the woods, "usually walked in Indian file," or that a certain village chief "behaved in a high-hat fashion."

One American raised a disturbing possibility with respect to translation: "I do not imply that it was done, but any translator could have deleted or added material, since as far as I know, no interviews were

retranslated as a check." That may have occurred, but seems improbable. Many of the interviewers who did not write in English still could read it quite fluently and often referred to their reports after they had been typed up in final form. If significant material had been omitted they would have protested. Also, the Americans who could read French or Vietnamese occasionally checked back to the original drafts, and no alterations of this type were found.

Editing policy seems to have been fairly uniform among the team leaders and others who did editing. The goal was to make the reports as complete and comprehensible as possible while preserving whatever "atmosphere" was left after translation. Very little was cut. What was deleted was nearly always material that was incomprehensible.* Contradictory information was left standing. There were occasional deletions of information that might have seriously compromised the respondent if it had become known, and some names of persons and places were changed to protect the respondent. Ungrammatical and unidiomatic English expressions were left as they were if they seemed to help convey the flavor of the interview. Numerous errors in spelling and typography testify merely to the speed with which both the Vietnamese typists and the American editors had to work.

In spite of the best intentions, however, corrections in grammar and efforts to make answers understandable probably did lead to some changes in meaning. One team leader noted that he had tried to prevent such changes by going over the edited report with the original interviewer. But when the interviewer could not read English, that precaution could not be taken.

A few interview reports--probably not more than twenty during the four years of the project--were discarded in their entirety. Most of those were produced by interviewers who worked for the project very briefly and were let go when they proved not to have the necessary abilities. One such interviewer turned out to be suffering from serious

* One team leader reported that he occasionally cut material having to do with mistreatment of prisoners, in order not to jeopardize access to certain police or military installations, but that does not seem to have been a general practice.

mental disturbances. A few other reports were discarded when they proved to have no relevant information. For the most part, however, "bad" as well as "good" interviews were retained as part of the record. There were instances in which the tape recording was so poor that it could not be understood. Unless the interviewer had happened also to take notes of the conversation, no report could be written. Many interviews were not written up at all when the interviewer concluded that the respondent had nothing relevant to say, but once written, reports were ordinarily allowed to stand.

As the above account indicates, no *systematic* quality check was built into the project. There were many individual verifications and checks, but they were made sporadically--and sometimes by accident. Felicitous accidents occurred in perhaps a dozen cases when, due to mix-ups, the same respondent was interviewed twice by two different interviewers. Then it was possible to compare the two reports. A slightly larger number of interviews were repeated by design when there was some doubt about the accuracy of an interviewer. One such interviewer was observed to take very few notes and then to compose lengthy reports on the typewriter. He seemed to be engaged in creative writing. Only a few weeks after he had been hired, he left the Saigon office to pay a gas bill and never returned, so the field director decided to have all the respondents he had seen reinterviewed. It turned out that he had an unusual memory, because what he had reported was accurate. He had, however, apparently forgotten some important topics. Several other reinterviews that were conducted for the same purpose turned up some sloppy work but no outright distortions. When a team leader or field director was present at an interview, about ten percent of the cases, it was possible to compare his notes with the interviewer's report.

Vietnamese-speaking team leaders were in a position to make somewhat better checks than others. Two of them translated portions of tapes from time to time and compared their translations with the final reports. Another compared the original Vietnamese drafts with the English translations. Team leaders who did not speak Vietnamese had to confine themselves to checking the internal consistency of the reports and to asking interviewers to review the transcripts when doubtful cases were encountered.

Even though these sporadically applied quality control devices were insufficient, and some team leaders complained, it is noteworthy that they did not turn up any serious errors. If there had been widespread inaccuracy, one would assume that even haphazard controls would have disclosed it. Furthermore, nearly all--if not all--of the team leaders and field directors had great confidence in the integrity and competence of the interviewers and translators who stayed with the project for more than a brief period and who were responsible for at least 90 percent of the interview reports.

Finally, certain external checks were possible. Some field directors and team leaders regularly read copies of captured documents that dealt with conditions in the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese armed forces or with social and political conditions in the countryside. Direct comparisons between the information in those documents and statements in the interview reports were rarely possible, but when they were possible the two sources tended to confirm each other. The general picture that the documents contained was also in accord with the overall view presented in the interview reports. Thus, while minor inaccuracies probably crept into the reports at various stages of their production, on balance they appear to comprise a reasonably reliable and valid body of information.

VI. CRITICISM OF THE PROJECT

WHILE UNDER WAY, the project was frequently criticized, both by those who were directly involved in it and by those at Rand in the United States who had occasion to refer to the interview reports. Several of those criticisms were technical, such as claims of inadequate quality controls; others were more basic.

One criticism was that the validity of the whole body of data could be questioned simply because it was collected mainly from prisoners and defectors. Experience in other wars, those critics pointed out, showed that information from such sources was always heavily biased because of the shattered emotions of the respondents and the delicate and dependent position in which they found themselves. No efforts to build rapport or to relax the respondent could compensate for the effects of his emotional condition and physical position. According to this line of reasoning, it should have been recognized, especially from experience in World War II and Korea, that *all* captives and defectors are pre-occupied with the hardships they have endured and that few insist on the righteousness of the cause for which they have been fighting. Furthermore, prior experience should have taught us to concentrate just as much on what was *not* said by defectors or prisoners as on what was said. For instance, one Rand analyst noted that nowhere in the interviews could he find a prisoner or defector who ever maligned Ho Chi Minh, even in the most open-ended conversation, which should be given weight as suggesting that they agreed basically with the goals of the Lao Dong (the Communist Party), even though they might say otherwise in answer to specific questions.

Those who defended the project agreed that allowances should be made for overall respondent bias but believed that the gross predictive

value of the information in the interviews was good and that much of their factual information could be confirmed by outside sources. For instance, they pointed out, even the earliest interviews had correctly portrayed the toughness, flexibility, and resiliency of the Viet Cong political structure, and the very poor social and political conditions in the portions of the countryside that were under the control of the Saigon government. If anyone had inferred from the interview reports that the Viet Cong movement was about to crumble, the error owed to a misinterpretation of the data, not to faulty data. As for the absence of attacks on Ho Chi Minh, according to this reasoning, none of the non-Communist Vietnamese who worked with the project attacked him either. They were Vietnamese nationalists, many of whom had fought against the French, and they accepted Ho as a nationalist too, even though they disapproved of his policies.

As regards the conduct of the project, critics said that too little effort was made to control the bias of "our" side. That is, the kinds of questions in the questionnaires, the interests of field directors, team leaders, and interviewers all influenced the kinds of information obtained. Questionnaires should have been based on very different viewpoints; for example, some questionnaires should have been designed to elicit "bad news" rather than "good news."

Again, many of those involved in the project agreed in part with this criticism. The questionnaires did have bias, and it would have to be discounted by users of the interview reports. Nevertheless, they argued, much of the information obtained was purely factual and would have had to be obtained by any investigator, no matter what his point of view. Though many of the questions were designed to locate weaknesses in the Viet Cong military and political structure, the respondent was given an opportunity to free-associate and to say whatever was on his mind, which partially compensated.

Another general criticism was that the project was poorly coordinated. As one analyst put it, apparently reacting to the diversity of questionnaires used in the later stages of the project, the operation looked like a form of individual entrepreneurship, in which each analyst simply picked out a topic and a method and went his own way. There was no consensus on methodology or on the precise objectives of the study, and no

unified point of view. Another objected that the project attempted to study everything, when that is impossible. Objectives should have been narrowed, and early interview reports should have been analyzed to make the later questionnaires more precise. As early as possible, detailed, standardized instructions for all aspects of the project should have been devised. Interviewers, team leaders, and even field directors should not have been allowed such latitude in introducing new questions--sometimes in response to local pressures in Saigon--and in abandoning old ones.

Those who defended the project agreed that it was loosely coordinated but believed that a virtue as well as a flaw. By allowing a number of different approaches to the study of certain central themes, it was possible to explore more avenues and to gain greater confidence that different biasing factors would cancel out rather than reinforce each other. The richness of the body of interview reports owed in part to the diversity of the approaches, and it would have been a mistake to restrict the freedom of the interviewers to probe for further information on topics they considered relevant.

Critics objected further that the way the project was conducted made most quantitative comparisons meaningless. Systematic procedures were not followed in choosing respondents, and the composition of the universe was not known. Trends could not be ascertained because the nature of both the sample and the universe could have shifted over time. That criticism found general agreement, although those familiar with the field conditions pointed out that choosing a random sample from a known universe would probably have been impossible.

Granting the difficulty of randomization, the critics said, there should have been more closed-end questions to enable more accurate comparisons within the body of interview reports. The questionnaires should have been more highly structured. (In point of fact, few of the "2" series and a number of the later series were based on fairly highly structured questionnaires.) To this, a strong believer in qualitative analysis replied that any search for trends, or an effort to establish ratios, correlations, and so forth, was likely to invalidate the project rather than improve it. Both sides in this dispute might have been

mollified had the interviews begun with a larger number of structured questions, followed by open-ended questions, but that combination was not attempted.

Even without a random sample or "closed" questions, some observers noted, it might have been possible to introduce greater rigor into the project by selecting a few relatively small geographical areas and a few Viet Cong military units for analysis, rather than attempting to cover the length and breadth of South Vietnam. A variant of this approach was in fact followed in the "DT" series, which is confined to a single province, and it seemed to work out rather well, although perhaps even one province was too large an area. Nevertheless, defenders of the country-wide approach said that it would have proved impossible to find a sufficient number of knowledgeable respondents from any small area, or from any one military unit, to make adequate, in-depth studies. Furthermore, studies of small areas and units might have failed to reveal the tremendous differences that were found from area to area and unit to unit.

Another objection was that interviewers should have probed more to uncover psychological factors. In practice the interviewer might ask a respondent: "Why did you defect from the Viet Cong?" Then, having received an answer, he would move on to the next question without searching for deeper causes. Some men said they defected because they were criticized by their superiors or fellow fighters, but others were criticized but did not defect. Why? What role did childhood experiences play? In short, a study of "motivation" should have had a more pronounced psychological orientation. To this it can be said that the project probably would have benefited if some interviews had been extended to permit prolonged psychological probing by a trained clinician or analyst.

Miscellaneous criticisms and suggestions for improvement made by field directors and team leaders include the following:

- o Our interview schedule was too detailed, running ultimately to over one hundred pages. This fatigued both the interviewer and the respondent, and both tired before they reached the really meaty questions, which sometimes were not even asked.

- o Too many interviewers stayed rigidly within the questionnaires, and accepted brief, noncommittal answers without probing.

- o There was often a failure to follow promising leads and avenues of inquiry.

- o Interviewers should have been given more extensive training. One used the interview situation to explore areas in which he was personally interested; another acted like a detective; a third had been originally trained as a military interrogator, and showed this.

- o Tape recorders should have been used more systematically, and an adequate supply of tapes should have been assured so that it would not have been necessary to erase them and use them over.

- o American personnel should not have been rotated so often. No sooner were the Vietnamese accustomed to working with one set of Rand people than they would have to start "breaking in" another set.

- o The time lag between the interview and the completion of the final report was too great, and resulted in inaccuracies and loss of information.

Users of the interview reports will undoubtedly have their own criticisms--and their own replies to some of these criticisms.

Appendix A

THE RAND VIETNAM INTERVIEW SERIES

Series AG: Active Influence Within the Viet Cong and North Vietnam Armed Forces

Including the G Series, the largest of the Rand interview series, with 649 interviews of VC and NVA ralliers, prisoners, VC suspects, and refugees. It explores the respondents' motives in joining or not joining the VC, cohesive and centrifugal forces within the VC, and everyday village life in North Vietnam. (AD 741301)

Series AGR: Attitudes of Refugees Toward Various Aspects of the War

Eighty-four interviews of refugees from VC-controlled and contested areas throughout South Vietnam in 1965. They explore the attitudes of these people toward the Viet Cong, the GVN, the Americans, and the war in general. (AD 741302)

Series BH: Attitudes Toward Halt of Bombing of North Vietnam

Fifty-four interviews of South Vietnamese and civilians on the attitudes toward the cessation of American bombing in North Vietnam in 1968. (AD 741303)

Series C: Reactions of Viet Cong to 1967 Tet Talks

Seven interviews with Viet Cong ralliers and prisoners on their activities during and attitudes toward the 1967 Tet talks. They were conducted from November 1967 to January 1968. (AD 741304)

Series DT: Activities of Viet Cong Within Dinh Tuong Province

A case study of Viet Cong activities within one province. Between 1965 and January 1968 (just before the Tet offensive), 285 ralliers, prisoners, refugees, and villagers were interviewed to gain information on the operational procedures of the Viet Cong in Dinh Tuong Province. (AD 741305)

Series FD: Reasons for Joining the Viet Cong

Interviews of 47 Viet Cong prisoners and ralliers in 1967 to ascertain the motivations of individuals joining the Viet Cong. (AD 741306)

Series FX, LX, and SX: Infiltration Routes and Methods

The FX, LX, and SX interviews relate to the infiltration routes and methods, and the expectations of the interviewee during his journey to the South. They were conducted in 1967 and 1968. The LX series contains five in-depth interviews, which include some information on North Vietnam. The FX series includes 22 shorter interviews based on the LX questionnaire. The SX series of 59 interviews, also based on the LX questionnaire, added specific questions about infiltration through Laos. (AD 741307)

Series GE: Experiences and Expectations During the Tet Offensive

Fourteen interviews with Viet Cong and North Vietnamese ralliers and POWs, conducted in March 1968, on their experiences and expectations during the 1968 Tet offensive. (AD 741308)

Series H: Villagers' Impressions of Herbicide Operations

Forty-two interviews with South Vietnamese villagers, in 1966, on their impressions of herbicide operations and on the economic and psychological effects of the operations on village food supplies. (AD 741309)

Series K and KO: Elements of Viet Cong and North Vietnam Cohesion

Eighty-seven interviews with prisoners and ralliers from Viet Cong and North Vietnamese main and local force units in 1967 and 1968. They explore in depth the interviewees' experiences and attitudes, in an attempt to discover what binds the individual to the NLF cause. (AD 741310)

Series L: Saigon Residents' Attitudes on the War

Fifteen interviews of civilians on the outskirts of Saigon, in 1965, on their attitudes about, and reactions to, the war. (AD 741311)

Series "Miscellaneous": GVN and VC Policies

Sixteen interviews with GVN officials, South Vietnamese citizens, and one high-ranking VC rallier. (AD 741312)

Series PIE: Viet Cong Infrastructure in South Vietnamese Villages

Interviews of 102 South Vietnamese civilians, in 1965-1966, about Viet Cong activities within their villages and hamlets. (AD 741313)

Series PT: Viet Cong Knowledge of Paris Negotiations

Interviews of 47 Viet Cong ralliers in 1968 to determine their knowledge of the Paris negotiations initiated in May of that year. An attempt is made to distinguish the individual's beliefs from the party line. (AD 741314)

Series SF: Reasons for Defection

Interviews of 148 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese ralliers in 1966-1967 on their reasons for defecting. A shortened version of the AG questionnaire was used to elicit information on recent military experiences, unit effectiveness, and village conditions. (AD 741315)

Series Tet-B: Refugees' Reactions to the Tet Offensive

Interviews of 248 refugees in 1968 on their reactions to the Tet offensive and their attitudes toward the Americans, GVN, VC, and NVA. (AD 741316)

Series Tet-VC: Organizational Activities of Viet Cong During the Tet Offensive

Eighty-two interviews of Viet Cong prisoners and ralliers, conducted in 1968, on the organization, planning, reactions, and expectations of the Viet Cong during the Tet offensive. (AD 741317)

Series V: Viet Cong Organizational Activities at Hamlets/Village Level

Interviews, conducted in 1967-1968, of 106 Viet Cong prisoners and ralliers, refugees, and ordinary villagers to determine Viet Cong organizational activities at the hamlet and village levels. (AD 741318)

Series XN: Effects of Bombing of North Vietnam

Closed interviews of 115 infiltrators from North Vietnam, both ralliers and prisoners, conducted in April 1968, on the effects of bombing in the North and the interviewees' attitudes toward it. (AD 741319)

Series Z: Viet Cong Organization and the Motivation and Experiences of Its Members

Including ZH and ZO Series, 137 interviews of Viet Cong and North Vietnamese ralliers and prisoners on organizational procedures in the

Viet Cong infrastructure, and the motivations and military experiences of its partisans. Respondents were primarily cadres and regroupes. These are the first Rand Vietnam interviews, and were conducted in 1963-1964. A number are in French. (AD 741320)

The following tabulation summarizes the data on the interview series.

Series	Number of Interviews	Approximate Number of Pages
AG, G	649	28,000
AGR	84	3,300
BH	54	360
C	7	80
DT	285	10,000
FD	47	730
LX	5	340
FX	22	340
SX	59	1,800
GE	14	150
H	42	800
K, KO	87	4,100
L	15	340
Miscellaneous	16	360
PIE	102	1,750
FT	47	200
SF	148	2,000
Tet-B	248	1,000
Tet-VC	82	700
V	106	2,300
XN	115	115
Z, ZO	137	4,000
Total	2,371	62,765

Appendix B

SOME RAND STUDIES BASED ON THE VIETNAM INTERVIEWS

<u>Rand Document No.</u>	<u>Title, Author, Date</u>	<u>Defense Document Center Control No.</u>
RM-4507/3	<i>Viet Cong Motivation and Morale: A Preliminary Report</i> J. C. Donnell, G. J. Pauker, J. J. Zasloff, March 1965	AD 738742
RM-4703/2	<i>Political Motivation of the Viet Cong: The Vietminh Regroupees</i> J. J. Zasloff, May 1968	AD 672745
RM-5163/2	<i>Origins of the Insurgency in South Vietnam, 1954-1960: The Role of the Southern Vietminh Cadres</i> J. J. Zasloff, May 1968	AD 673001
RM-5267/2	<i>Some Observations of Viet Cong Operations in the Villages</i> W. P. Davison, May 1968	AD 672746
RM-5462/1	<i>A View of the VC: Elements of Cohesion in the Enemy Camp</i> K. Kellen, November 1969	AD 738743
RM-5487-1	<i>The Viet Cong Style of Politics</i> N. Leites, May 1969	AD 738744
UM-5647	<i>Volunteers for the Viet Cong</i> F. H. Denton, September 1968	AD 677465

<u>Rand Document No.</u>	<u>Title, Author, Date</u>	<u>Defense Document Center Control No.</u>
RM-5799	<i>The Viet Cong in Saigon: Tactics and Objectives During the Tet Offensive</i> V. Pohie, January 1969	AD 738741
RM-5848	<i>Documents of an Elite Viet Cong Delta Unit: The Demolition Platoon of the 514th Battalion--Part One: Unit Composition and Personnel</i> D.W.P. Elliott, M. Elliott, May 1969	AD 691715
RM-5849	<i>Documents of an Elite Viet Cong Delta Unit: The Demolition Platoon of the 514th Battalion--Part Two: Party Organisation</i> D.W.P. Elliott, M. Elliott, May 1969	AD 691716
RM-5850	<i>Documents of an Elite Viet Cong Delta Unit: The Demolition Platoon of the 514th Battalion--Part Three: Military Organisation and Activities</i> D.W.P. Elliott, M. Elliott, May 1969	AD 691717
RM-5851	<i>Documents of an Elite Viet Cong Delta Unit: The Demolition Platoon of the 514th Battalion--Part Four: Political Indoctrination and Military Training</i> D.W.P. Elliott, M. Elliott, May 1969	AD 691718
RM-5852	<i>Documents of an Elite Viet Cong Delta Unit: The Demolition Platoon of the 514th Battalion--Part Five: Personal Letters</i> D.W.P. Elliott, M. Elliott, May 1969	AD 691719